

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: July 1, 2015
	Section 8: Developing the Case Plan	Version: 6

POLICY [REVISED]

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will have a Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK) approved [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) within 45 days of removal or disposition, whichever comes first for:

1. Every child who has been adjudicated a Child in Need of Services (CHINS);
2. All children with an open case type;

Note: For children participating in a Program of Informal Adjustment (IA), the signed [Program of Informal Adjustment](#) serves as the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#)

3. Children who are at imminent risk of removal; or
4. A Juvenile Delinquent or Juvenile Status (JD/JS) for whom DCS has been ordered to pay for the placement, and the child is IV-E eligible.

DCS will seek input from professionals who may not be members of the Child and Family Team (CFT) but have expertise relating to the child and family's strengths and needs (e.g., physicians, mental health professionals, school personnel, and other community service providers), for the purpose of developing the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

[REVISED] DCS will work with the parent, guardian, or custodian, extended family, child/youth (if age and developmentally appropriate), and the CFT, if applicable in developing the Case Plan.

Exception: DCS will not involve the parent in the case planning process if parental rights have been terminated or they cannot be located after diligent effort. See separate policies, [5.3 Engaging the Family](#) and [5.4 Noncustodial Parents](#)

[NEW] Youth, age 14 and older, are required to participate in the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). These youth may select up to two (2) child representatives to be a part of their CFT to assist with the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#). See Practice Guidance. DCS will ensure that all youth, age 14 and older in out-of-home care receive the [Indiana DCS Bill of Rights for Youth in Care](#).

[NEW] DCS may excuse the child from the Case Planning process by documenting in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) the determined reasons for youth's inability to participate effectively in the development of the Case Plan due to a physical, mental, emotional, or intellectual disability.

[NEW] Note: If the youth refuses to participate in the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), DCS must record the refusal and document efforts made to obtain the child's input or participation in the development of the Case Plan.

DCS must include the resource parent(s) and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in developing the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), if they are not already members of the CFT.

DCS will ensure that the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) is updated at least every 180 days from the effective date of the previous plan. The [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) should be updated anytime there is a significant change (e.g., change in placement, identified needs, change in permanency plan, parents failure to participate in services, parents cannot be located, changes with parent's income and employment, child's income and resources, etc.).

Code References

1. [IC 31-34-15: Case Plan](#)
2. [42 USC 675\(1\) and \(5\)](#)
3. [45 CFR 1356.21\(g\) Case plan requirements](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. For cases with identified domestic violence, staff with the Supervisor to determine how to protect the safety of the non-offending parent and child(ren) when writing the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#);
2. Convene a CFT Meeting, if applicable for the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) with the required parties:
 - a. Parent, guardian, or custodian (including noncustodial parent),
 - b. **[REVISED]** Child/youth (if age appropriate and developmentally appropriate [youth age 14 and older are required to participate in CFT meetings]),

[NEW] Note: FCM must ensure that all youth age 14 and older, receive the [Indiana DCS Bill of Rights for Youth in Care](#) and understand the bill of rights before signing the completed case plan.

- c. Resource parent(s) (if applicable),
 - d. CASA/GAL,
 - e. Licensed Child Placing Agencies (LCPA) - if applicable, and
 - f. FCM and his or her Supervisor.
3. Schedule and convene a Case Plan Conference, if all required parties (resource parent(s), CASA/GAL) are not part of the CFT;

[NEW] Note: Youth age 14 and older are required to participate in the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#).

4. Develop the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#):
 - a. Determine the Permanency and Concurrent Plans that are in the best interest of the child. Ensure that objectives and activities outlined in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) support the Permanency Plan. See separate policy, [6.10 Permanency Plan](#),
 - b. Specify the activities or tasks to be undertaken, the person(s) responsible for each task, and the time frames for achieving the goals, objectives, and tasks,
 - c. Ensure that services are in place that addresses all identified risk factors. See separate policy, [5.10 Family Services](#) and Practice Guidance for more information;

- d. Develop or update the [Family Support/Community Service/Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) while helping the parents gain the confidence and capacity needed to care appropriately for the child/youth,
 - e. Ensure that the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) is realistically related to the underlying needs of the family/youth,
 - f. Prioritize the goals and service delivery based on the immediate safety needs of the child/youth and the risk of future Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N), and
 - g. Recognize the importance of both formal and informal community supports to the family/youth.
5. Complete the [Family Support/Community Service/Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) and update information regarding changes in the child's or parents status including:
 - a. Change in the child's or a parent's income;
 - b. Parent's employment status; and
 - c. Parent's place of residence.

Note: These types of changes in the parent's status may also require updating information related to Title IV-E Eligibility as the parent may be unable to provide support and care to the child. See Separate policies in [Chapter 15 Eligibility](#).

6. Obtain signatures on the approved [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) from the required parties:
 - a. Parent, guardian, or custodian (including noncustodial parent),
 - b. **[REVISED]** Child (if age and developmentally appropriate [youth age 14 and older are required to sign the Case Plan]),

[NEW] Note: FCM must ensure the youth age 14 and older knows that by signing the case plan he or she is also acknowledging the receipt of the [Indiana DCS Bill of Rights for Youth in Care](#) and that the bill of rights was explained in a manner that he or she was able to understand.

- c. **[NEW]** Child representative;
 - d. Resource parent(s) (if applicable),
 - e. CASA/GAL,
 - f. LCPA, if applicable,
 - g. Residential treatment provider, if applicable, and
 - h. DCS FCM and his or her Supervisor.
7. Mail or hand deliver a copy of the signed [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) within 10 days of completion to the required parties as well as the following:
 - a. Additional persons specifically identified in the plan who will play a role in implementing the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), and
 - b. Service providers outlined in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#).
 8. File a copy of the signed [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) with the court at the next Periodic Case Review.

The Supervisor will:

1. Provide input into [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) development as needed;
2. For cases with identified domestic violence, staff with the FCM to determine how to protect the safety of the non-offending parent and child(ren) when writing the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#);

3. Ensure the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) development process is completed in a timely fashion; and
4. Review and approve the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) prior to its distribution.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

[NEW] Child Representatives

Beginning at the age of 14, youth may select up to two (2) child representatives. The child representatives must be at least 18 years of age, members of the CFT, and may not be a foster parent or FCM. The youth may select one (1) of the child representatives to also be his or her adviser, and if necessary, advocate for age appropriate activity. Child representatives are subject to the approval of DCS, and they may be rejected if there is cause to believe that they would not act in the best interest of the child.

Permanency Plan

The Permanency Plan is the intended permanent or long-term arrangement for care and custody of the child. The Permanency Plan must include one (1) of the following goals that the court considers most appropriate and in the best interest of the child:

1. Reunification;
2. Adoption;
3. Legal Guardianship;
4. **[REVISED]** Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) (only applicable for youth age 16 and older); or
5. Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative.

Reunification

The process by which a child returns to live with either legal parent, guardian, or custodian without continued supervision and/or intervention by DCS. Typically, reunification is the most favorable permanency goal for a child as long as the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) are able to provide a safe, nurturing and stable home. Most children want to return to or remain in their home with their parent(s) and support this permanency goal.

Adoption

The legal process when a child becomes the legal child of a person or persons other than their biological parents. A child may be adopted by a relative, a resource family, or an unrelated person. Adoption offers the most stability to a child who cannot be reunified with their parent(s).

Adoption may be the most appropriate permanency goal when the child has been under a dispositional decree for at least six (6) months with no progress made towards a plan of reunification, when termination of parental rights are filed, or when a judge rules that attempts to reunify the family are not necessary.

Legal Guardianship

The transfer of parental responsibility and legal authority for a minor child to an adult caregiver who intends to provide permanent care for the child. Guardianship can be established with or without the termination of parental rights. Transferring legal responsibility removes the child from the state child welfare system, allows the caregiver to make important decisions on the child's behalf, and establishes a long-term caregiver for the child.

Guardianship may be an appropriate permanency goal for children who are placed with a relative for at least six (6) months and are at least 13 years of age. The CFT should decide if guardianship is a more appropriate permanency goal than reunification or adoption.

[REVISED] Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

Refers to a situation in which DCS maintains care and custody responsibilities for the youth, but places the youth in a setting in which the child is expected to remain until successful adulthood, such as:

1. With resource parents who have made a commitment to care for the youth permanently, but are not moving toward adoption;
2. In a residential facility (e.g., for youth with emotional or developmental disabilities who require long-term residential care); or
3. Receiving services (IL) that will lead the youth to successful adulthood living after emancipation from the child welfare system.

[REVISED] APPLA may only be identified as a permanency plan for a youth age 16 and older, and must supported and approved by the CFT. When a youth age 16 and older has a permanency plan of APPLA, documentation is required at each periodic case review hearing. The documentation should reflect intensive ongoing, and current unsuccessful efforts to return the child home or secure placement with a fit and willing relative (including adult siblings), a legal guardian, or an adoptive parent, including through efforts that utilize search technology (including social media) to find relatives for the youth. DCS must document compelling reasons why it continues to be in the best interest of the youth to have APPLA as a permanency plan and why alternative permanency plans such as Reunification, Adoption, Legal Guardianship, or Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative are not in the best interest of the child.

Fit and Willing Relative

The permanent placement of a child with a fit and willing relative who is able to provide adequately for the child's needs and is willing to care for the child long-term. When a child is placed with a fit and willing relative, the CHINS case will remain open, typically until the child reaches the age of majority.

Placement with a fit and willing relative may be an appropriate goal for children who have been in placement with the relative for the past six (6) months and the relative has made a commitment to provide for the child until the child reaches the age of majority. The CFT should decide if a fit and willing relative is a more appropriate permanency goal than adoption or guardianship.

Case Planning and Domestic Violence

For cases where domestic violence has been identified as a risk factor, the FCM will collaborate with the CFT to develop a logical and achievable plan for the child(ren) and family by prioritizing service needs. Services should first focus on "barrier" issues that must be dealt with before family members can benefit from other services. The [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) should focus on the concrete supports the non-offending parent needs as well as supports that counteract the coercive tactics used by the alleged domestic violence offender. The [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) should indicate that it is important for the alleged domestic violence offender to stop being violent, begin taking responsibility for the violence, and reduce their power and control tactics before the non-offending parent and/or child(ren) can safely participate in other services with them.

Note: Items listed below are examples of goals and objectives that may be included in a [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#).

Case Plan goals or objectives for non-offending parents may include:

1. Parent will participate in safety planning for self and children;
2. Parent will participate in an evaluation and counseling to address personal safety issues in order to protect self and child(ren) from alleged domestic violence offender;
3. Parent will not use excessive discipline with the child(ren);
4. Parent will develop capacity and willingness to protect child(ren);
5. Parent will participate in supportive counseling for self and child(ren) to reduce the negative effects of domestic abuse;
6. Parent will participate in domestic violence education;
7. Parent will participate in educating him or herself regarding the effects of domestic violence on children and will help child(ren) cope with and recover from the effects of domestic violence;
8. Parent will comply with recommendations for child(ren)'s therapy; and/or
9. Parent will assist in the development of, and compliance with the [Family Support/Community Service/Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#).

Case Plan goals or objectives for child(ren) may include:

1. Child(ren) will develop skills for self-protection that match his or her age and ability;
2. Child(ren) will develop skills to cope with and recover from the after-effects of witnessing domestic violence;
3. Child(ren) will participate in therapy;
4. Child(ren) will not be violent;
5. Child(ren) will participate in individual or group sessions learning alternatives to violence; and/or
6. Child(ren) will have a safety plan that is consistent with their willingness, age, and development.

Case Plan goals or objectives for alleged domestic violence offenders may include:

1. Participate in an evaluation and specialized treatment program and follow all recommendations; the alleged domestic violence offender will be required to attend and complete the program; the alleged domestic violence offender may be required to pay for the program;
2. Develop capacity and willingness to protect child(ren) by stopping all abusive behavior toward all family members. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, stalking, and neglectful behavior;
3. Will not interfere with the therapy for child(ren) nor question the child(ren) regarding their sessions;
4. Will not involve the child(ren) in attempts to control the non-offending parent or force them to witness or participate in other abusive behaviors;
5. Will participate in educating him or herself regarding the effects of domestic violence on children;
6. Comply with all court orders and probation conditions; and/or
7. Will develop a [Family Support/Community Service/Safety Plan \(SF 53242\)](#) with the FCM.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#)
2. [Program of Informal Adjustment](#) – Available in MaGIK
3. [Family Support/Community Service/Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) -Available in MaGIK
4. [Indiana DCS Bill of Rights for Youth in Care](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Parent, Guardian, or Custodian Not Available/Refuses to Participate in Case Planning

The FCM must document in MaGIK the efforts made to involve both parents, guardian, or custodian. Despite a parent, guardian, or custodian's refusal to participate in the development of the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#), the FCM must provide a copy of the document to the parent, guardian, or custodian and ask him or her to review and sign it.

Elements of the Case Plan

1. **Objectives**
Objectives are statements of direction that are measurable. The objectives in a [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) describe desired statements or outcomes. In the CFT process, identifying objectives is a powerful process that creates energy and direction leading to change. The objectives become the map or foundation for change. The team then identifies formal and informal supports to meet the stated objectives;
2. **Strengths**
A child and family's available past and present experiences, assets, interests, resources and preferences provide strengths to meet needs. Strengths are more than value statements such as "she loves her child" (inventory). Strengths identified as resiliency, experiences, assets, interest, or qualification, are strengths that can be applied in building the action steps of a plan.;
3. **Needs**
A need may be a requirement that is essential to all human beings such as the need for shelter, food, affiliation or nurturance. A need is often a description of the underlying conditions that may be the source of the symptoms or the behavioral expressions of problems that a family may be encountering; and
4. **Activities**
Activities represent the agreement we have with self and others. Activities are the pathways to meeting the needs and achieving our objectives. Activities should be meaningful enough to motivate the person toward an action and an achievement. Activities should be reasonable enough for people to have confidence in accomplishing the defined task(s). Activities should be clear enough so that members within and outside the team share a common understanding of what is to be achieved. Activities should define the "who, what, how, where, and when" of the planning process.
 - a. Activities are behaviorally specific, provide clear direction, concrete, measurable, and observable,
 - b. Activities are built around the strengths of the family and other CFT members,
 - c. Activities are progressive, moving from the simple to the complex, and
 - d. Activities include the person(s) responsible and the target completion date for each activity.¹

¹ Paragraphs on Goals, Strengths, Needs and Activities are adapted from the Planning Curriculum, The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group.

Change in Child or Parent's Status

The [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) should document changes regarding the parent's income, employment status and place of residence. These changes can have a direct impact on whether the child is considered deprived of parental care and support, which is a requirement of eligibility for federal funding. It is also critical that any changes to the child's income or resources be documented as these also can affect the child's eligibility for federal funding. Hard copy documentation of these changes should be in the case file and MaGIK must be updated as well.

Deprivation

Deprivation information must be updated when certain changes to the parent's employment and/or income occur. Examples of when to update deprivation information include, but are not limited to:

1. Change in parent's employment status;
2. Change in parent's part-time employment (number of hours employed); or
3. If parents have separated or reunited, (parents have stopped living together or resumed living together).

See separate policy, [15.6 Deprivation](#)

Domestic Violence and Cultural Considerations²

When developing a [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) with families experiencing domestic violence, the FCM may want to consider the following questions to ensure that all recommended services are accessible and appropriate for the family:

1. Are there culturally sensitive resources, materials, and services for non-English speaking families?
2. Are there specialized services for self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ) youth who request services or are victimized by their caregivers and/or partners?
3. Are there specialized services available for heterosexual men who are victimized by their partners?
4. How will a non-offending parent's immigration status affect his or her ability to obtain services recommended in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#)?
5. How does the family view American culture? How will this impact the family's ability to seek help?
6. Are daycare and transportation services available so that the non-offending parent can attend domestic violence counseling or meet other service plan requirements?
7. Does the local domestic violence shelter have food and living accommodations appropriate for ethnic families, disabled individuals, or non-offending parents with older male children?
8. Is there transitional housing, affordable housing, or economic support for non-offending parents once they leave the domestic violence shelter?
9. Do non-offending parents who live in rural communities have accessible transportation to domestic violence advocacy programs and other support services?

Regional Permanency Teams

² Adapted from Bragg, H.L. (2003). *Child Protection in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence*. (pp.52-53). Washington DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.pdf>

Regional Permanency Teams are designed to ensure that all children live in a permanent, safe, and supportive environment after case closure. Permanency Teams are in place in each region to assist FCMs in achieving permanency for all children on their caseload. These teams are designed to supplement current existing practices. FCMs are expected to utilize all available permanency resources including Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP).

Regional Permanency Team members can include: FCM, FCM Supervisor, Local Office Director, Regional Licensing Specialist, probation officer, CASA/GAL representative, and IL specialist. Cases reviewed by the team are specifically selected based on length of stay in care, time of involvement, and severity of needs identified. The team reviews the case and develops plans to help move the child towards permanency. The team must also review and approve changing a child's permanency plan to APPLA.